National Interagency Coordination Center

Wildland Fire Summary and Statistics 2007

National Interagency Coordination Center

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Identifier Legend

Interagency Coordination Centers

NICC – National Interagency Coordination Center
AK - Alaska
EA - Eastern Area
EB - Eastern Great Basin
NO - Northern California
NR - Northern Rockies
NW - Northwest
RM - Rocky Mountain
SA - Southern Area
SO - Southern California
SW - Southwest
WB - Western Great Basin
CIFFC - Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre
NIK - National Interagency Radio Support Cache

Other:
PRI - Private

Government Agencies

Department of the Interior:
BIA - Bureau of Indian Affairs
BLM - Bureau of Land Management
FWS - Fish & Wildlife Service
NPS - National Park Service
AMD - Aviation Management Directorate

Department of Agriculture:
FS - Forest Service

DOD & **DDQ -** Department of Defense

Department of Homeland Security:
FEMA - Federal Emergency Management Agency

Department of Commerce:
WXW - National Weather Service

ST - State
ST/OT – State and Other

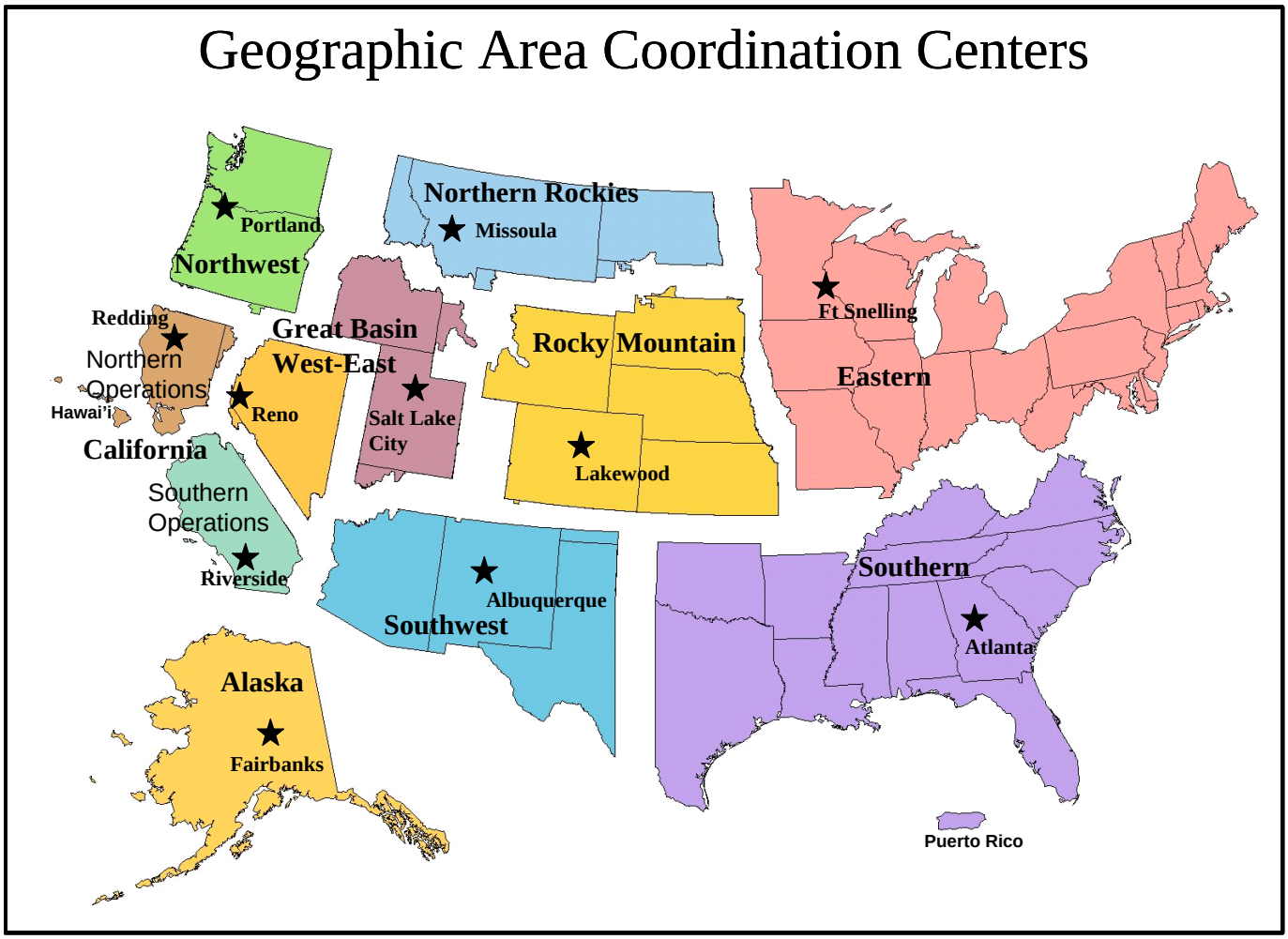
CN - Canada

Preface

Statistics used in this report were gathered from the Fire and Aviation Management Web Applications (FAMWEB) system, which includes the Situation Report and Incident Status Summary (ICS-209) programs. Previous National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) annual reports and other sources were also used to provide data for this report. The statistics presented in this report are intended to provide a national perspective of annual fire activity, but may not reflect official figures for a specific agency. The statistics are delineated by agency and Geographic Areas. Pie chart figures are rounded to the nearest whole percentage point.

For specific or more detailed information contact individual agencies.

Resource mobilization statistics used in this report were gathered from the Resource Ordering and Status System (ROSS), which tracks tactical, logistical, service and support resources mobilized by the national incident dispatch coordination system. The statistics presented in this report are the resource requests that were processed through NICC and ordered by one of the eleven Geographic Area Coordination Centers. The resource ordering process and procedures may be found in chapter 20 of the National Mobilization Guide. The National Mobilization Guide can be found on the NICC web site, (www.nifc.gov/news/nicc.html) under reference materials.

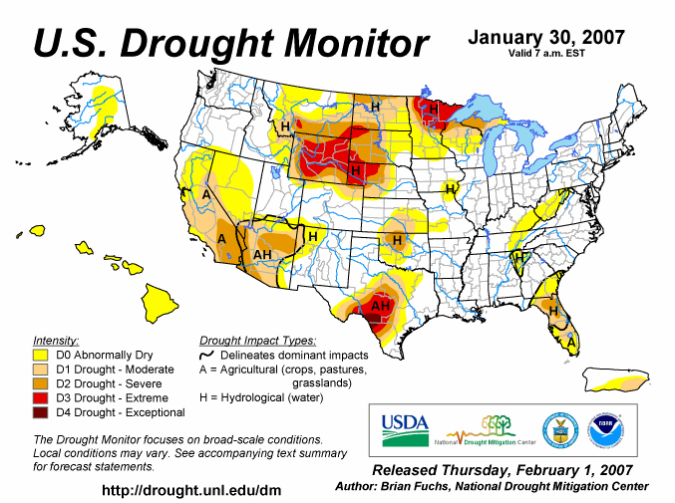


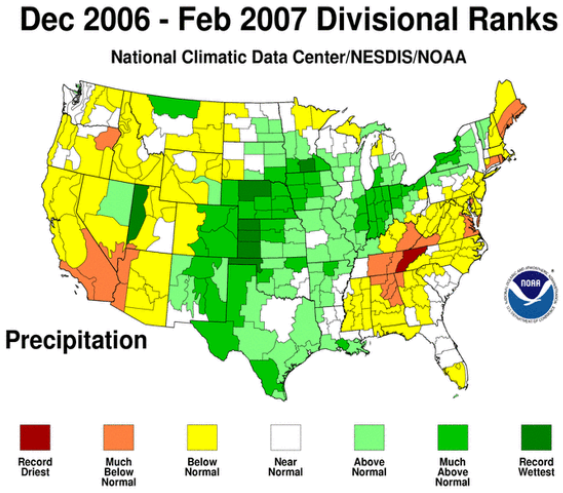
National Interagency Coordination Center

2007 Fire Season Summary

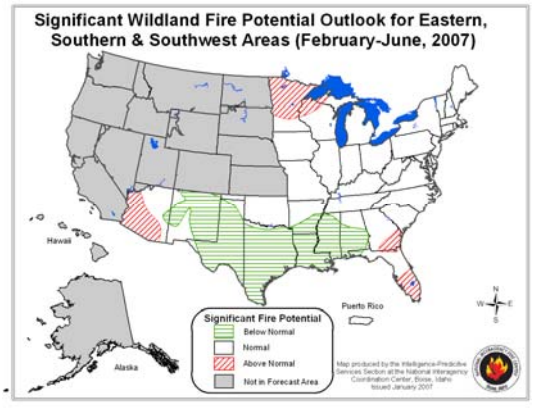
Winter (December 2006 – February 2007)

The winter (December through February) of 2006-2007 was drier than normal over the West and Southeast and wetter than normal over the central U.S. and Great Lakes region. Temperatures were colder than normal in the West, while warmer than usual weather was noted over the northern tier of states and the Atlantic Coast states. Much of Alaska was warmer and drier than normal. Scattered areas of drought continued across the country as of mid-winter.





The ***National Seasonal Assessment Workshops*** (NSAWs) were held in late January for the Eastern and Southern States and in late April for the Western States and Alaska. These workshops brought together fire managers, fire intelligence personnel, predictive services meteorologists, and climatologists from across the United States to develop fire season outlooks for their respective Geographic Areas. This year's workshop for the Western States and Alaska was held in conjunction with the second annual North American Seasonal Assessment Workshop (NASAW), which included international participants from Canada and Mexico. The NASAW is part of an ongoing experimental effort to coordinate fire potential outlooks among the three countries.



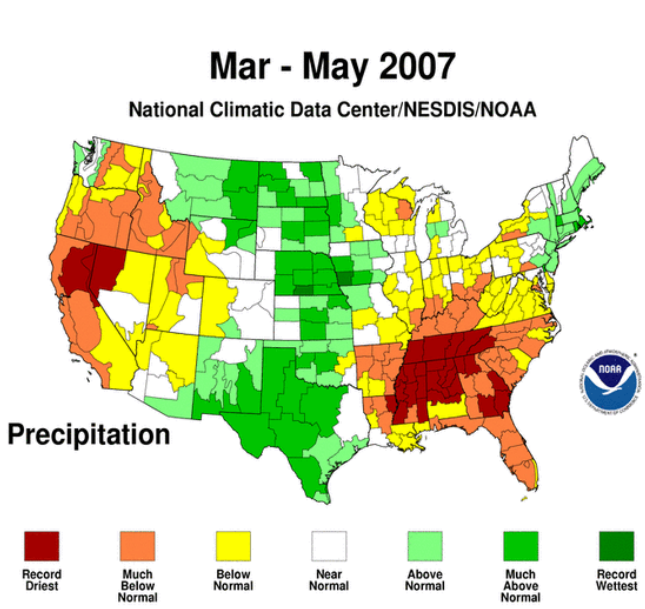
Initial seasonal outlook reports for the Southwest, Southern and Eastern Areas called for significant fire potential over the western Great Lakes, southeast Georgia, southern Florida and southwest Arizona. An earlier-than-normal start to fire season was expected in the East, with a later-than-normal start expected in the Southwest. Below-normal fire potential was forecast for much of the south-central portion of the country. Normal potential was forecast for the remainder of the area (see image at right). Another above-average Atlantic

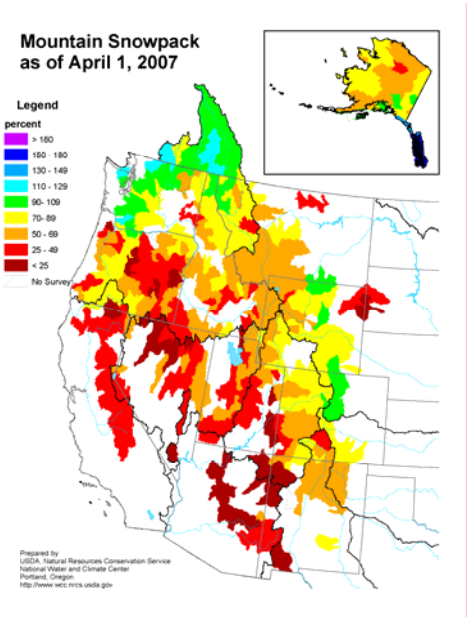
hurricane season was projected for 2007 with greater activity expected than in 2006.

Spring (March – May)

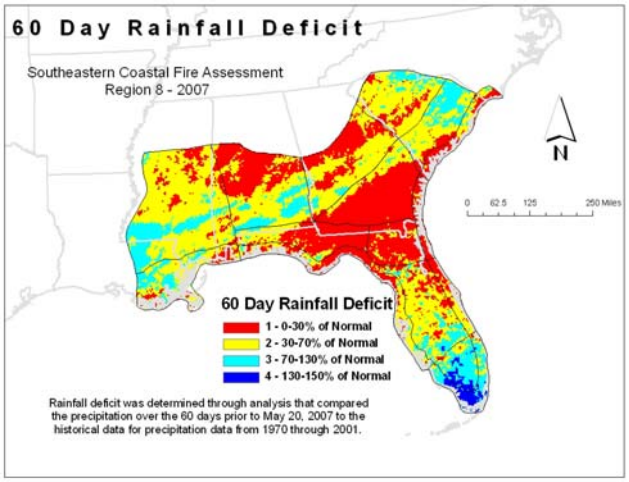
Spring was much warmer than normal across most of the country except for cooler-than-average conditions over Texas, the Gulf Coast and Northeast states. The Southeast recorded its driest winter-spring (from December through May) on record. The West was also quite dry with California and Nevada reporting the driest 12 month period ever (June 2006 – May 2007). Conversely, the middle third of the country was much wetter than normal. Alaska saw a rather cold March followed by a warmer-than-normal April and May. Spring precipitation varied across the state with driest weather in the southwest corner of the state.

A dry winter and spring resulted in a very poor snowpack across most of the West. The April 1, 2007 snowpack map (below) showed many areas having less than half their normal snowpack, with only the Washington Cascades and a few drainages in the Rockies reporting near-normal conditions.

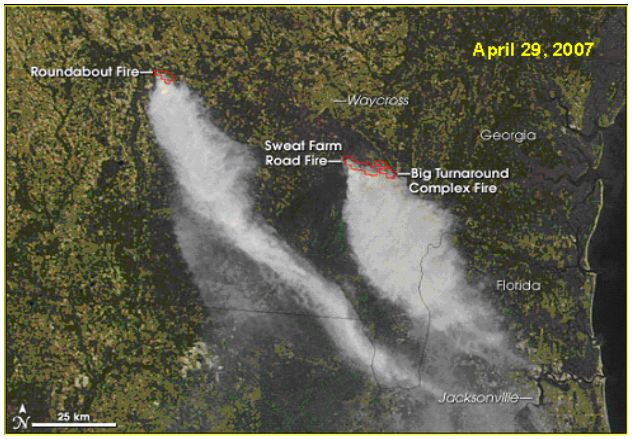




The Southern Area had a very active spring fire season and by the end of May had experienced 25,130 fires which burned 1,037,612 acres (approximately 175 percent of their normal year-to-date acres based on a 10-year average). Rainfall deficits were primarily centered in northern Florida, southeastern and northern Georgia, and the northern portions of Alabama (see image). As of May 24, there were a number of areas in Alabama, Georgia, Florida, and Tennessee that had gone 40 days or longer without significant precipitation. Fuels were exceptionally dry and areas had ERC values



exceeding the 97th percentile or historic maximums. Smoke also became a significant concern. Several large fires, including the Sweat Farm Road and Big Turnaround Complex, produced large amounts of particulates over an extended time period. This smoke impacted a large area and numerous communities, including Atlanta, Georgia (see images below).



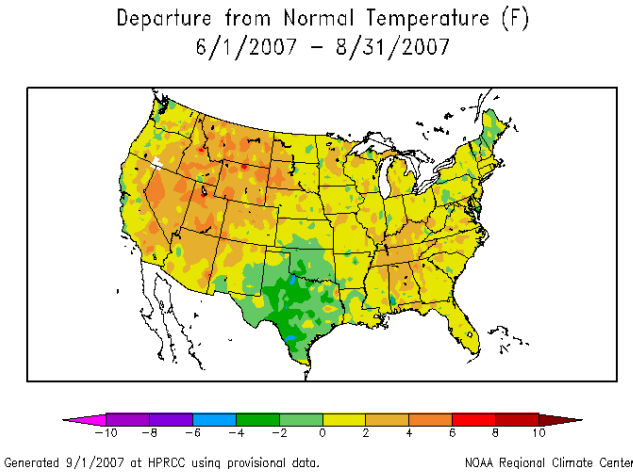
Wildfire activity also increased significantly in the Eastern Area during May when 3,262 fires burned approximately 105,000 acres during that month. On the other hand, both Alaska and the Southwest had a slow onset to fire season. Fuels were quite dry in the western half of the Southwest, especially in southwest Arizona. However, initial attack fire activity and large fire emergence were relatively light. The north/central portion of Alaska was the only area of concern by late May with only a limited number of stations reporting high to extreme fire danger indices.

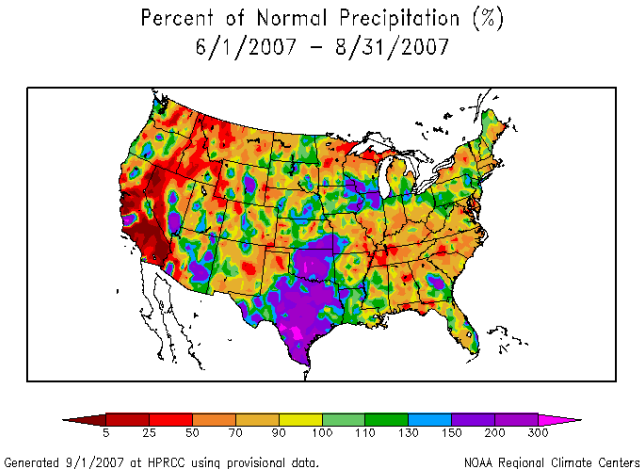
Summer (June – August)

The summer of 2007 was very warm nationally, with much-above-normal temperatures across the West throughout the season, and record heat in the East during late summer. Temperatures reached record levels in June and July for portions of the Great Basin and portions of Idaho and Montana. The Southeast experienced the worst of the heat in August with widespread record temperatures in the Ohio River and Tennessee Valley, and in the Southeast. Precipitation varied across the country for the June through August 2007 time period. California, northwest Nevada, Idaho and Montana were drier than normal. Wet conditions persisted from mid-summer on across Arizona, the southern Great Basin, and portions of Colorado and Wyoming. The monsoon began on time with the main focus of moisture over Arizona in July. In the East, the western Great Lakes, the Ohio River and Tennessee Valley, and much of the Southeast experienced dry conditions for most of the summer. Texas and Oklahoma remained very wet into the first half of summer. Alaska experienced warm and dry conditions for the northern and eastern portions of the state, with cool and wet conditions in the southwest.

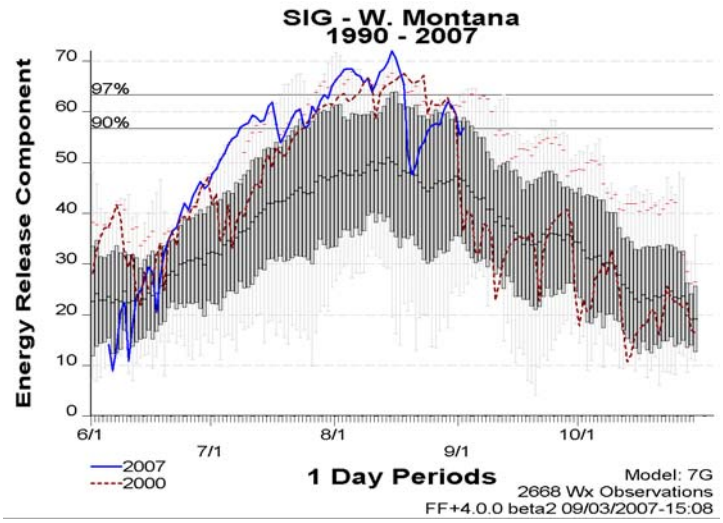
The National Seasonal Wildland Fire Potential Outlook, issued May 1, 2007, called for above-normal fire potential across much of California and the Great Basin, southwest Arizona, southern Montana, southeast Washington and northeast Oregon. Above-normal significant fire potential was also forecast for portions of the Southeast and the southern Appalachians. Much of the West and Southeast entered the summer of 2007 in continued long-term drought, with low live fuel moistures and vegetative stress. Low snowpack, warmer-than-normal temperatures and early snow melt over the Eastern Great Basin and Northern Rockies brought

an onset to fire season two to three weeks earlier than normal. In addition, abundant carryover herbaceous fine fuels remained over portions of the Great Basin from the wet winter of 2004-2005.





During the summer, the northern half of the Great Basin, Northern Rockies and the Northwest Areas dominated large fire activity. One exception to this was the Zaca fire in Southern California, which started on July 4 and eventually grew to over 240,000 acres by Sept. 3, when it was finally contained.



Winter snow pack levels across the mountains of northern California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho and western Montana rapidly diminished with sustained very hot, dry weather. This caused higher-elevation fuels to dry out much more rapidly than normal, with ERC values reaching critical levels two to three weeks ahead of previous active fire years. The image shown at right displays a 2007 ERC index trace for western Montana and north/central Idaho overlaid on the average and one-Standard Deviation bars for each day since 1990. This image shows how rapidly fuels dried out beginning in mid-June. Fuels continued to dry out and fire danger indices climbed to critical levels across much of the West by early July and remained there until precipitation starting on August 17 began to mitigate fuel dryness. However, rapidly drying fuels, combined with continuing lightning activity and several wind events, set the stage for ongoing spikes in initial attack activity and large fire growth until the end of August.

Nevada was another area that saw a significant jump in fire activity during July. At the end of June, the Western Great Basin had burned just 12 percent of its normal year-to-date acres, but by the end of July that number had jumped to nearly 900,000 acres, or approximately 275 percent of average.

Fortunately, Alaska never dried out sufficiently to become a major concern during the summer. The state experienced 94 percent average for number of fires, which burned just 17 percent of average acres by the end of August. The Rocky Mountain Area also had a relatively quiet summer season in terms of large fire events. Several wet thunderstorms worked their way across Colorado and Wyoming, keeping fuels from drying out to critical levels for any sustained periods of time. By the end of August, a near average number of fire starts burned just 43 percent of average acres in the Rocky Mountain Area.

August was a very active month for much of the western U.S. Fire danger indices and fuel moistures were near record levels, setting 20-year historic records in many locations. Frequent lightning storms tracked across much of the west, and while initial attack activity remained below normal in most areas, numerous large fires emerged, especially in Idaho and Montana. Meanwhile, initial attack activity remained consistently above average in the Southern Area during the summer months due to persistent and exceptionally dry fuels.

By the end of August 65,966 fires were reported, and 6,971,593 acres burned, which exceeded the national 10-year average of 59,752 fires and 4,978,668 acres burned by that date. As of August 31, the 2007 fire season experienced 106 percent of average fires, and 128 percent of average acres burned during the past 10 years.

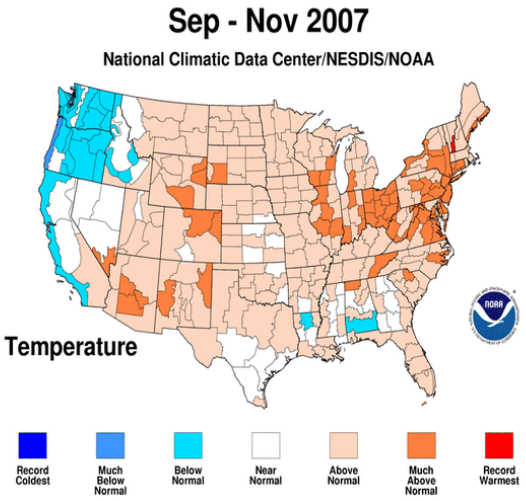
The Geographic Areas that experienced the most burned acres by August 31 were Eastern Great Basin (more than 1,200,000 acres above normal), Southern Area (nearly 400,000 acres above its 10-year average), Northern Rockies (950,000 acres, nearly double its 10-year average), and Western Great Basin (more than 236,000 acres above its 10-year average). All Geographic Areas experienced increased fire activity by the end of summer except for Alaska, the Southwest, Rocky Mountain and Northern California Areas.

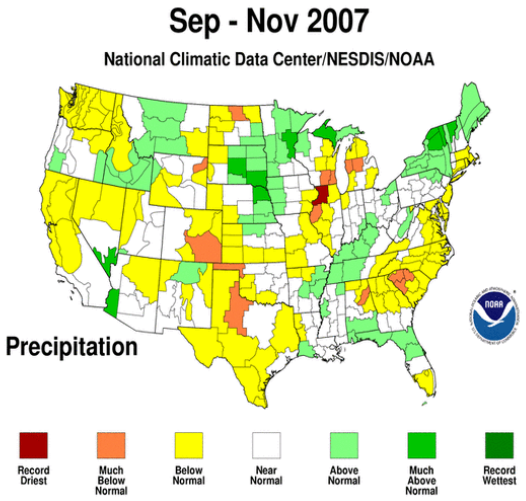
By the end of August, 1,121 large fires had been reported to NICC, down from the 1,639 large fires reported by that date in 2006. In comparison, by August 31 the number of large fires reported in each of the following years was: 626 in 2002; 720 in 2003; 540 in 2004; and 470 in 2005. Eight large fires or complexes had burned more than 100,000 acres apiece as of August 31, 2007.

Fall (September – November)

September and October had below to near-normal temperatures across the West with above-normal heat across much of the central and eastern sections of the country. The fall also began with generally wet conditions across much of the West and dry conditions across the Mid-West and Mid-Atlantic states. Precipitation shut off across the southwest quarter of the country in October. This combined with an underlying drought and strong offshore wind events in southern California, spelled a critical fire weather event for late October into very early November. By mid-November, precipitation across southern California and Arizona substantially decreased fire potential. The extreme drought across the Southeastern states continued to intensify throughout much of the fall.

California experienced exceptional large fire activity during late October and into November.





On October 21, Santa Ana winds fanned numerous fires in southern California, some of which became major blazes in the ensuing days. Between October 21 and November 9, when the last two major fires were contained, more than 978,000 acres had burned in that Geographic Area. By mid-November, fire activity had slowed substantially across the West.

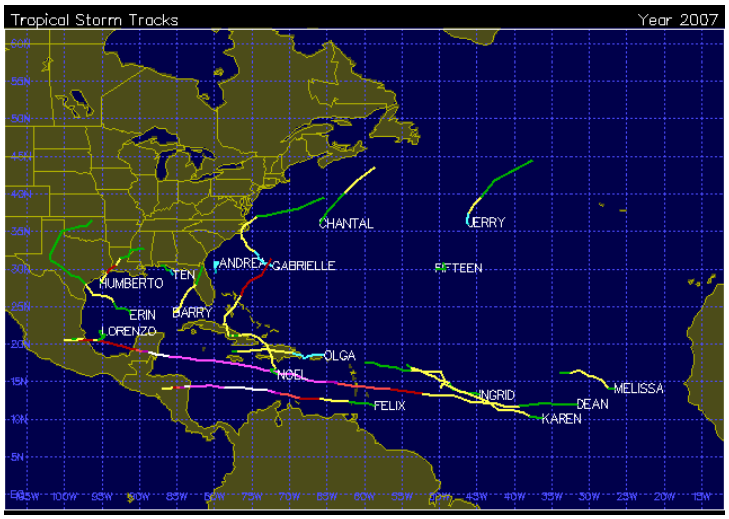
Resource Mobilizations

Through international agreements, the U.S. provided 133 firefighters and managers to Australia in January and February 2007. Two fire specialists were sent to Canada in August. Canada provided five Type 1 crews to Montana for a 14-day assignment in August. Canada also provided 100 pumps to the NIFC Cache. No other foreign resources were requested in 2007.

Six Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System (MAFFS) C-130 aircraft were deployed to southern California in late October to support fire suppression operations. These aircraft, two each from North Carolina, Colorado and Wyoming National Guard units, were assigned from Oct. 23 to Nov. 6. The aircraft flew 98 missions and dropped 199,860 gallons of fire retardant.

Hurricane Activity

The 2007 Atlantic hurricane season experienced near to slightly above normal tropical activity. Fifteen named storms occurred, including five hurricanes, two of which became major storms (Category 3 or higher). A normal hurricane season is 10 named storms, with six becoming hurricanes. Although the number of named storms in 2007 was much above normal, the number of hurricanes was slightly below normal, and the majority of storms did not impact the U.S. Map by Unisys Corporation: http://weather.unisys.com/hurricane/atlantic/2007/index.html.)



National Fire Activity Synopsis

Like 2006, fire season 2007 was well above average in both reported fires and acres burned. A total of 85,705 wildfires were reported to NICC for the year. This is 110 percent above the 10-year average, and 112 percent above the 20-year average. The number of acres burned in 2007 was 9,328,045. This is 170 percent above the 10-year average, and 204 percent above the 20-year average.

Eight Geographic Areas experienced above average acres burned. Three Geographic Areas reported above an average number of fires in 2007. Only three Geographic Areas, the Southwest, Rocky Mountain and Alaska had below average fire seasons in 2007.

Fifty-three fires exceeded 40,000 acres in size in 2007 (see page 13). In 2006, 44 fires exceeded 40,000 acres each. Eight Geographic Areas (Eastern Great Basin, Northern Rockies, Alaska, the Northwest, Northern and Southern California Operations Areas, Southern Area and Western Great Basin) had fires that exceeded 40,000 acres in size. Eastern Great Basin had the highest number of these fires at 14, followed by the Northern Rockies with 11. Alaska reported just one large fire over 40,000 acres. Ten states reported no large fires in 2007 (see maps page 15).

There were 24,073 prescribed fire projects reported in 2007, down slightly from last year's 24,429 projects (see page 25). The number of projects was significantly higher than the 10-year average of 13,857 projects annually. Accomplished acres in 2007 were the highest reported since 1998, at 3,149,067 acres. This is nearly a million acres above the 10-year average, and more than 428,000 acres above last year's accomplished acres.

The number of Wildland Fire Use incidents in 2007 was slightly above the 10-year average at 346 (see page 29). The annual average is 327. However, the number of acres burned was significantly above the 10-year average at 430,529. The 10-year average is 187,416 acres.

The nation was at Preparedness Levels 4 and 5 for 60 days in 2007, the third highest number of days since 1990 (see page 32). The 10-year average is 40 days at PL 4 and 5 combined.

As in 2006, demand for national Incident Management Teams was high in 2007. Type 1 Teams were mobilized 62 times and spent 805 days on assignments. Mobilized Type 1 Teams peaked in late August when thirteen Teams were on assignment at one time (see page 34). In 2006, Type 1 Teams were mobilized 76 times and spent 873 days assigned to incidents.

Type 2 Teams were mobilized 159 times and spent 1,590 days on assignments in 2007. Mobilizations peaked in mid-July at 30 Teams assigned (see page 34). In 2006, Type 2 Teams were mobilized 248 times, and spent 2,278 days on assignments. Fire Use Management Teams were mobilized 19 times and spent 295 days on assignments in 2007. In 2006, Fire Use Management Teams were mobilized 24 times, spending 331 days on assignments.

Five Area Command Teams were mobilized 11 times and spent 154 days on assignments. In 2006, three Area Command Teams were mobilized eight times and spent 101 days on assignments. Two National Incident Management Organizations were mobilized 11 times and spent 187 days on assignments in 2007.